

Title:

Columbia/Snake River Temperature Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

Objective/Intended Use:

Establish the maximum heat load that can be added to the Columbia and Snake River main stems in order to achieve water quality standards for (WQS) for temperature.

Abstract/Summary:

EPA and the States of Idaho, Oregon and Washington are working in coordination with the Columbia River Tribes to establish a temperature TMDL for the mainstems of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Both rivers are on state 303(d) lists of impaired waters for exceedances of water quality standards for temperature. Further, temperature has been identified as an important factor in the recovery of Columbia Basin wild salmon stocks listed pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as threatened or endangered. The 2000 Biological Opinion (BIOP) for the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) called for the development of a water quality plan to achieve the BIOP's long term goal of attainment of WQS for temperature. The water quality plan should develop actions to be taken by the FCRPS to meet WQS. The TMDL will establish the improvements in temperature needed at the various FCRPS projects to establish the context for those actions. The TMDL is an inter-jurisdictional effort involving WQS from three states and one tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Another tribe, the Spokane Tribe of Indians has adopted WQS that have not yet been promulgated by EPA. The TMDL effort is a collaborative effort among the five jurisdictions. Federal agencies involved in the effort in addition to EPA are NMFS and the FCRPS action agencies, US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and Bureau of Reclamation (BoR). The WQS for the bulk of the 900 river miles in the project area require the estimation of what temperature would be in the absence of human activity in Oregon and Washington that effects water temperature. The main scientific/technical challenge for this TMDL is estimating these so called site potential conditions and then characterizing them in a manner amenable to development of a TMDL.